

GOAL:**4 Promote stewardship of New Hampshire's resources for recreation and other activities that contribute to the health and quality of life for citizens and visitors in New Hampshire.**

New Hampshire's natural and cultural landscape and four-season climate provides a great setting for people to participate in a wide range of recreation opportunities. The State is home to approximately 1,000 lakes and ponds, 18 miles of coastline, and 1,200 miles of rivers providing locations for swimming, water sports, fishing and boating. Over 83 percent of New Hampshire is heavily forested, including the popular 760,000-acre White Mountain National Forest and over one million acres of private forest and agricultural land. This vast area offers scenic beauty as well as opportunities for hiking, camping, picnicking, and wilderness experiences. The State provides habitat to hundreds of species of fish and wildlife, including popular game species for hunting and fishing, and several endangered and threatened species enjoyed by naturalists, birdwatchers, and photographers. New Hampshire's historic resources, rich in tradition, contribute to the State's scenic beauty and cultural heritage. Small historic villages, distinctive architecture, covered bridges, and winding country roads are all part of that tradition.

All together, these cultural and natural resources support the 4.2 billion-dollars of direct tourism spending in New Hampshire and inspire millions of residents and out-of-state visitors to enjoy the State's mountains, forests, lakes, rivers, and coastline.¹ Promotion of the State's outdoors will build the tourism industry and contribute to the State's economy, however, it comes with the need to manage and steward our resource base. New Hampshire's outdoors is critical to

residents' quality of life. Comprehensive open space and greenway planning, and a greater integration of recreation, open space, and transportation goals will ensure a balance between resource protection and an economy that relies on enjoyment of those resources.²

There is a growing trend toward collaboration among recreation providers and municipal and school officials to increase opportunities for physical activity and improve community health and well-being. Inclusion of green spaces as part of downtown and neighborhood revitalization and a heightened recognition of the role recreation and open space play in contributing to more livable, sustainable communities are vital components of land use and transportation planning at the state, regional, and local level.

New Hampshire Outdoors, 2003-2007, New Hampshire's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), and the forthcoming 2008-2013 SCORP, address the following six major issues and challenges concerning the state's recreation and natural resources:

1. Ensure stewardship of the resource base for outdoor recreation;
2. Provide different, sometimes competing, recreational opportunities;
3. Apply limited financial and human resources to address a range of recreation needs;

4. Educate recreational users, municipalities and landowners about responsible behavior, laws, and liability;
5. Understand impacts of existing land use patterns on recreational opportunities; and
6. Recognize importance of local outdoor recreation opportunities and open space protection in promoting increased health and wellness.³

These six issue statements drive the following five strategies. Additionally, the SCORP offers a series of recommendations to address each issue, many of which are incorporated here as implementation tasks.

STRATEGY 1:

Ensure that the quality and quantity of the natural resource base is maintained or enhanced as recreation pressures increase.

Open space is critical to maintaining New Hampshire's quality of life. Continued conservation and stewardship of the resource base is essential to maintain a wide range of recreational opportunities and community identity, and protect natural and cultural heritage. Tourism will continue to play a key role in the state's economy and development pressure and population growth will persist, albeit not at the same high rates of the past. Good planning, management and stewardship are important to limit potential impacts to ecologically sensitive areas and wildlife, and to maintain quality recreational experiences. This stands to become an even greater issue as competing pressures on existing open space grow and demand for outdoor recreation continues to rise.

Strategy Implementation:

- A. Support the funding and implementation of statewide, regional, and local open space, recreation corridor, and greenway plans and projects.
- B. Encourage state, regional, and municipal partnerships with non-profits and land trusts to acquire and protect locally significant open space lands.
- C. Utilize Fish and Game's Wildlife Action Plan as a tool to assist in land use and recreation planning.
- D. Emphasize stewardship when lands are protected by the state, municipalities, or other organizations and require a stewardship plan as a prerequisite of grant funding.
- E. Develop long-term stewardship management plans for existing or new state-owned or operated public recreation properties and encourage private conservation and recreation landowners to do the same.
- F. Support increased enforcement of environmental laws by state agencies and examine existing limitations to successfully do so given current staff and funding levels.
- G. Utilize and promote existing technical assistance programs when parcels are protected.

STRATEGY 2:

Ensure that a variety of recreational opportunities are provided, even as competing pressures and potential conflicts arise when multiple activities compete for the same resources.

Recreation planning must consider changing environmental, cultural, economic, social, and technological trends in conjunction with natural resource protection, citizen participation in decision-making, an aging society, access to information technology, and increased focus on growth management.² Travel and tourism will continue to grow so long as sites remain easily accessible and transportation affordable. Coupled with continued growth, this will generate greater demand for recreational facilities creating greater future congestion and potential conflict among users as they vie for limited space and resources.⁴ Cultural and socio-economic changes will continue to modify recreation opportunity demand. Despite these potential conflicts and pressures, the final supply of recreation resources will have to achieve a balance that meets demand without degradation to the surrounding environment.

Strategy Implementation:

- A. Promote educational programs and activities that help people of all ages recognize the recreational potentials associated with getting to know the natural environment, its inhabitants, and processes.
- B. Work with recreational organizations and Department of Environmental Services to produce and promote best management practices (BMPs) for recreational uses including trail development and maintenance.
- C. Educate communities and private landowners about existing mechanisms that promote local recreational opportunities while continuing to support and maintain these programs.
- D. Build coalitions between public and private landowners and recreation land users to ensure collaborative

maintenance and stewardship that meets all stakeholders' needs.

- E. Encourage landowners to post their property based on accepted uses rather than deferring to commonly available 'No Trespassing' signs.
- F. Use education and information-based strategies to mitigate conflict by incorporating messages into public information sources and improving Internet based recreation information sources.
- G. Ensure that recreational opportunities are available to those with disabilities through technical assistance and incentives to recreation providers and create a guidebook of accessible outdoor recreation facilities.

STRATEGY 3:

Wisely use financial and human resources including volunteers, partnerships, youth programs, to meet a wide range of recreational needs.

High quality recreation requires an investment of both financial and social capital. Resources are needed for adequate planning, new facility development, land acquisition for both organized (e.g. ball fields) and unorganized recreational opportunities (e.g. hiking or bird-watching), maintenance, facility rehabilitation, as well as, long-term stewardship, natural and cultural resource protection, and enforcement. However, external grant funds are limited and often target only certain needs or priorities. The challenge remains to find ways to creatively finance recreation and make use of a wide range of volunteer and non-financial resources.

Strategy Implementation:

- A. Evaluate recreation facility improvements to give priority to projects that have an operations and maintenance plan and have shown sound stewardship on existing facilities
- B. Continue to provide acquisition funding to support new local land and water based recreational lands/facilities.
- C. Undertake an educational campaign to garner civic investment in preserving the quality and quantity of recreational facilities.
- D. Promote the importance of collaboration and volunteerism in developing and maintaining local recreation projects.
- E. Promote university and school-aged youth volunteerism through community based initiatives such as Boys and Girls Clubs, AmeriCorps, Boy and Girl Scouts, and university internships.
- F. Implement dedicated fees for other recreational uses, such as non-motorized trail funds.

STRATEGY 4:

Promote growth and development patterns that encourage local recreational opportunities and preserve appropriate undeveloped lands for future recreational use.

Sprawl, or unsustainable growth, creates patterns of development where increasing land area is consumed for various human activities and distances between destinations grow farther apart. The resultant increased automobile dependence and loss of open space negatively impact both the quantity and quality of outdoor recreation

opportunities.⁵ Walking or biking to a local park, store, or workplace is replaced by driving to locations on the outskirts of town. Where once stood a large tract of unfragmented forestland available for hiking and cross-country skiing now stands a subdivision or shopping plaza. Parks, open space, trails, and greenways are important community resources, and an important part of making a community livable. Communities must consider local needs and community character when making land use, transportation and recreation-related decisions.

Strategy Implementation:

- A. Integrate outdoor recreation within larger discussions of 'smart growth' and open space planning. Mechanisms to do so include:
 - Develop partnerships between recreation, land use, and transportation planning efforts.
 - Emphasize the benefits of natural resource inventories and open space plans as part of community planning efforts.
 - Improve ties between land use, open space, cultural resources, transportation, and recreation master plan chapters.
 - Promote interagency coordination to address recreation, trail and open space needs.
 - Promote multi-community recreation and open space plans.
- B. Encourage development that protects resource-rich lands valuable to recreational opportunities while simultaneously identifying locations suitable for growth and development.

- C. Support efforts to create or link local, regional and statewide trails, greenways, and community resources such as the Winnepesaukee River Trail, Sunapee Ragged Kearsarge Greenway, and Derry Pathways.
- D. Develop a joint education program targeted towards recreation departments, conservation commissions, and other appropriate boards focused on building awareness of the linkages between recreation and conservation.
- E. Educate communities about the importance and benefits of local, close-to-home recreational opportunities including the maintenance of community character, and social, cultural, and quality of life values.

STRATEGY 5:

Promote the health and wellness benefits gained from improving recreational opportunities and bicycle-pedestrian linkages in communities.

Recreation plays an important role in promoting individual wellness and supporting healthy communities. Lack of exercise and poor diet are two main factors contributing to obesity. Sixty-one percent of adults⁶ and 13 percent of students in grades 9 to 12⁷ were overweight or obese in 2005. Overweight and obesity rates have doubled for adults and tripled for children since 1980.⁸ In 2005, 50 percent of US adults engaged in 30 minutes of moderate physical activity, five or more times a week (federal recommendations) while 24 percent participate in no leisure-related physical activities.⁶

Community design either promotes or impedes physical activity and is critical to encouraging healthy citizens. Community development must expand its focus beyond the automobile to allow open space, and access for walking or

bicycling.⁹ Diverse solutions can promote physical activity for all people, regardless of age, physical ability, or environment – work, home, or outdoors.¹⁰

Strategy Implementation:

- A. Build connections with the NH Department of Transportation, public works departments, and land use boards to establish bicycle and pedestrian transportation networks.
- B. Promote local participation in statewide health promotion and education activities such as March into May, Safe Routes to School, Great American Smoke Out, and Bike and Walk to Work Day.
- C. Promote health and physical activity through civic programs such as historic district walking tours or organized nature walks at local conservation sites.
- D. Target state health and wellness outreach to local recreation providers and equip them to increase public involvement in local recreation opportunities.
- E. Consider the special needs of youth, elderly and disabled populations in promoting health and wellness through outdoor recreation events, facilities, and plans.
- F. Encourage the improvement and redesign of recreation facilities using universal design standards rendering facilities equally accessible to all individuals and utilizing safe playground standards.

¹ Goss, Laurence E., Ph.D. "New Hampshire Tourism Return on Investment for FY 2006 DTTD Tourism Promotion Activities." Plymouth, NH: Institute for New Hampshire Studies, Plymouth State University, 2007.
<<http://oz.plymouth.edu/inhs/Economic Reports/>>

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- ² Mertes, James D., James R. Hall. Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines. Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 1996.
- ³ Office of State Planning, Department of Resources and Economic Development. New Hampshire Outdoors, 2003-2007: Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. Concord, NH: State of New Hampshire, March 2003.
- ⁴ Cordell, Ken H. et al. Outdoor Recreation in American Life: A National Assessment of Demand and Supply Trends. Champaign, IL: Sagamore Publishing, 1999.
- ⁵ Office of State Planning. Annual Report to the General Court and the Governor on Growth Management. Concord, NH: New Hampshire Council on Resources and Development, December 2001.
- ⁶ National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. "Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System." Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2006.
<<http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/>>
- ⁷ National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. "Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System." Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2006.
<<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/yrbs/>>
- ⁸ National Center for Health Statistics. "National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES II and III Data Sets)." Atlanta, GA: Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007.
<<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes.htm>>
- ⁹ Healthy Places, Healthy People: Promoting Public Health and Physical Activity Through Community Design. Princeton, NJ: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2001.
<<http://www.rwjf.org/files/publications/other/HealthyPlaces.pdf>>
- ¹⁰ National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the US Surgeon General. US Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 1996.
<<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/sgr/sgr.htm>>